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Summons: A Short Play

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Summons

A short play by Laura Mae Ward

(With Latin requisitioned from Dr. Johnny Wink)

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Two male characters, two female characters, and one gender-neutral character.

Summons

Characters

PAIGE

EDWIN

EMILY

REANIMATED CORPSE

RESMORTUA

Scene

Open on a small graveyard. It's a bright summer night. EDWIN, EMILY, and PAIGE are sitting in a circle around a tombstone, holding hands. They are chanting "enavīganda" (eyyyy-nah-vee-gone-dah) as many times as the actors feel led. Then they fall silent for a beat.

EDWIN: I don't think this is working.

EMILY: Shhhh!

EDWIN: *defensively* What? Do you see any ancient deities rising from the earth?

PAIGE: Maybe we did it wrong.

EMILY: No, no, we did everything it said exactly.

EDWIN: I don't think it worked, man.

EMILY: Just wait, okay?

EDWIN: Come on, EMILY, you can't expect us to sit here all night.

EMILY: Just another minute or two. Come on. We can't give up now.

PAIGE: Emily, I'm sick of this. The ground is hard and EDWIN's hand is sweaty.

EDWIN: Well, I'm so sorry. can't imagine why I'd be nervous. It's not like I'm doing a satanic ritual or anything.

EMILY: Guys. It's not satanic. It's pagan. Also, shut up.

EDWIN: What for? Nothing's happening. We clearly did something wrong.

EMILY: Because you're disrupting the ritual!

EDWIN: The ritual disrupted itself by not working.

PAIGE: Hey guys? I think we're terrible at being pagans.

EDWIN: Nah, this is just a first try. We're doing a good job. I believe in us.

EMILY: Oh, how special and encouraging. Maybe we should all hold hands and sing a song and talk about our feelings.

PAIGE: Well, we're already holding hands...

EMILY: Shut up, PAIGE. *Snatches hand away, stands up, brushes dirt off*

PAIGE and EDWIN do the same

EDWIN: I mean, I guess we can try again if you want.

PAIGE: is that a good idea? What if we like double-summon him? Will he get annoyed? I don't want to annoy an ancient god of evil.

EMILY: We're not summoning RESMORTUA. We're resurrecting him. He'll be grateful.

EDWIN: Is it possible to double-resurrect something? Or would we just kill him again by accident?

EMILY *scoffs*. I'm going to go get more candles.

Exit EMILY

PAIGE: we really are terrible witches.

EDWIN: I don't really consider myself a witch. I prefer to self-identify as a funk-warlock.

PAIGE: That's not a thing.

EDWIN: Oh, sure it is.

PAIGE: You should ask EMILY to call you that. See what happens.

EDWIN: Nah, she's already pretty mad at me because she thinks I'm not taking this seriously.

PAIGE: Well, I mean, you aren't.

EDWIN: Of course I am! I just express it differently.

PAIGE: Come on, you're such a liar. It took so much googling to find this spell, and you're-

EDWIN interrupts: You found this on the internet?

beat

PAIGE: No. No I did not.

EDWIN: You found this on the internet.

PAIGE: Yeah.

EDWIN: Does EMILY know?

PAIGE: No.

EDWIN: All right. What are the odds that this is an actual spell?

PAIGE: Honestly, no idea. But it's probably fine. I think it's fine.

Enter EMILY, arms full of candles.

EMILY: Okay guys, you ready to try again?

Both: *(with a sort of guilty enthusiasm)* Yes!

EMILY sets down the candles, PAIGE picks up a few pieces of paper

PAIGE: Okay I think we need to try a variation on the spell. EMILY, can you do this chant? Walk counterclockwise over there and read this aloud. Then do the same again, walking clockwise.

EMILY nods and takes the paper solemnly. Her hands shake a bit.

PAIGE: EDWIN, can you help me arrange the candles? They should look like this. *Shows him a diagram on the other piece of paper in her hand.*

EDWIN: Yeah, sure. *They both get on the ground and start arranging candles into some shape as the actors feel led.*

EMILY walks the way PAIGE just described and says Selectos nisi das mihi llibellos, Admittam tineas trucesque blattas. *She does this super enthusiastically and dramatically. Like let her do some hops and jumps and arm gestures and such.*

Can we get a rumbling noise? I'd like for a rumbling noise to happen here. I'd like EMILY and PAIGE to kind of stumble like the ground is shaking, and have EDWIN totes just hit the deck and cover his head with his arms like a school tornado drill.

PAIGE: What was that?

EDWIN: I think it's working!

EMILY: hail, mighty lord of the night!

REANIMATED CORPSE, whose head is matted with blood or has an axe lodged in it or is visibly wounded or something, pops up groaning from behind a tombstone, yawns, stretches, and then looks around.

REANIMATED CORPSE: What in hell?

PAIGE: Is that him? Did we do it?

EMILY: I think we did it!

REANIMATED CORPSE: What's going on? Who are you people?

EMILY: We are devoted followers of the art of....

REANIMATED CORPSE interrupts: Wait, is this witchcraft!?

EDWIN: guys, I think we did something wrong.

REANIMATED CORPSE: What are those candles for? Are you devil worshippers?

EMILY: What do you mean we did something wrong? We summoned him. He's right there.

REANIMATED CORPSE: Why does my head hurt so bad?

PAIGE: Um....

REANIMATED CORPSE: Where is my family? Have you done something to them?

PAIGE: I think we accidentally necromanced some random dude.

EMILY: No, there's no way. We have to have done it right this time.

REANIMATED CORPSE: What the hell is going on?

EDWIN crosses to REANIMATED CORPSE: Excuse me, sir, can you tell us who you are?

REANIMATED CORPSE: My name is Elijah Smith. Who are you? What's going on?

EDWIN: Okay, yeah, we did it wrong.

PAIGE: Okay, Elijah, I need you to listen to me. Everything is going to be fine. We can put you back.

(beat)

REANIMATED CORPSE: ... Oh god, you're devil worshippers. *(REANIMATED CORPSE runs away.*

He doesn't exit stage left or right. He runs down the aisle through the audience and out of the theatre. I would like for his hand or something to fall off at some point while he's running down the aisle, but it's chill if you can't do that. As he runs, he keeps up a commentary.) Help! Police! I've been kidnapped by Satan worshippers! They're going to drink my blood! They're going to set my brain on fire and build an altar from my organs! They're going to steal my bones and sell me to the communists! *(running and yelling slowly gives way to walking and muttering)* How dare they try this heathen nonsense on

me. I fought in Normandy, and they think they're going to draw me into their evil schemes, well, no sir, it's not happening. Impertinent youngsters have no idea what made America great... *(walks facefirst into the door and pushes instead of pulls before finally managing to exit, then slams the door behind him)*

PAIGE, EDWIN, and EMILY just kind of stand there and watch him run off.

EDWIN: ... Should one of us go after him?

PAIGE: Yeah, I'll do it. *(exit while calling after him)* "Elijah! Elijah! Mr. Smith! We're not going to hurt you! We just need a little of your blood!" *(until she and her voice fade into the distance.)*

EMILY: Do you think we should just try a different spell? *Brings an old book out of her bag*

EDWIN: what is that?

EMILY: Oh, it's a book I found in my grandma's basement. Look, it's ancient and mystical. *She hands EDWIN the book*

EDWIN: *examining it* Are you sure?

EMILY: Yeah, look. The pages are faded.

EDWIN: I think they were just printed yellow.

EMILY: but... it's bound in leather, so it has to be old.

EDWIN: Yeah, I'm 90% sure that's fake leather.

EMILY snatches the book back

EMILY: it's real, okay?

EDWIN: Right, okay, sorry.

EMILY ignores him and opens the book

EMILY: I think this is the one we want. Hopefully we can just recite this and he'll be reborn.

EDWIN: Should we wait for PAIGE?

EMILY: Yeah, I guess so. If it works, we don't want her to miss it.

EDWIN: You know, actually, maybe we do.

EMILY: EDWIN!

EDWIN: Do you really want her to have a demon army? Do you honestly think that would end well?

EMILY: Oh, come on. You can't pretend your Faustian bargain plan is any more noble than what she's doing.

EDWIN: *snatches book* But it's less murder-y, and that's what matters. *Reads* Credo hoc esse ioculare. Ne me pellatis, amabo te.

rumble

EMILY: Did it work? Is it working?

Lights go out

EDWIN: I don't think it worked.

Let in a little bit of light as PAIGE enters from stage right, carrying a small flashlight in one hand and leading the REANIMATED CORPSE with her other hand.

PAIGE: What did you guys do?

EDWIN: I'm not sure. Can I see that light?

She hands him the flashlight

EDWIN: Thanks.

He points the flashlight toward the book for a moment.

EDWIN: Um. I think I accidentally read the wrong spell.

EMILY snatches book and light

EMILY: EDWIN, you idiot! You disappeared the moon!

EDWIN: Let me see it.

She hands him the book and the light, and he flips through a few pages.

EDWIN: Here, this should fix it. Lunam restituite!

Lights come back up.

[the following absurdity is totally optional depending on your lighting capabilities. If it's too much effort, just don't do the bit in these brackets.

the lights are green. Everyone looks up.

EMILY: Wait, has the moon always been that color?

PAIGE: eh, close enough.

They shrug]

EDWIN: All right, let's give it one more try.

REANIMATED CORPSE clears throat dramatically

REANIMATED CORPSE: You know, I'd like to be returned to my own time before you continue your devilry, if that's all right. 1957 may not be much, but it's better than whatever you call all this! *(dramatic arm gesture indicating his general surroundings)*

EMILY: Okay, fine. EDWIN, look for a spell. Um.. PAIGE? *Pulls PAIGE aside/downstage; they talk while EDWIN and REANIMATED CORPSE read the spellbook in the background*

EMILY: Did you tell him we brought him here through time travel?

PAIGE: I didn't have the heart to tell him he was dead. What was I supposed to do?

EMILY: Literally anything else.

In the background, EDWIN hands the spellbook to the REANIMATED CORPSE, who continues reading, and comes downstage to join the girls.

EDWIN: There's nothing in the book.

EMILY: Then what are we supposed to do?

EDWIN: You know, I'm not entirely sure, but I think the best option is to not accidentally resurrect corpses with internet spells.

EMILY rounds on PAIGE immediately

EMILY: You found that spell on the internet!?

PAIGE: Damn it.

EMILY: I can't damn it! Because you brought it back from the dead!

EDWIN: We couldn't just like shoot him or something, could we?

PAIGE: Maybe after we raise RESMORTUA, we could ask him to take care of it for us.

EMILY: I guess that works. Hey Elijah?

REANIMATED CORPSE joins them downstage

EMILY: We've figured out what we're going to do. Can I see that book?

Reanimated corpse hands her the book, she flips through the pages.

EMILY: Okay. This one is definitely the right spell. It's definitely going to work this time. *(Reads with hand gestures and purposeful walking)*

Eheu, fugaces, Postume, Postume,

Labuntur anni, nec pietas moram

Rugis et instantae senectae

Adferet indomiaequae morti.

(uncomfortably long pause)

EDWIN: um...

EMILY: shhhh!

(another long pause)

REANIMATED CORPSE: you people are really not very good at this.

beat

EMILY: Nothing happened. I can't believe this.

EDWIN: Do you think it's time to just give up?

PAIGE: yeah, let's just go home.

EMILY: You know what? Fine. I don't even care anymore.

EDWIN, EMILY and PAIGE exit.

REANIMATED CORPSE sits alone for a minute on his gravestone, center stage, looking confused.

Enter RESMORTUA, in the loudest and most intimidating possible fashion.

RESMORTUA: *(loudly, rumblingly, imposingly)* Puny mortals, who dares disturb the slumber of

RESMORTUA?

REANIMATED CORPSE: Oh, did those kids pull you through time too?

RESMORTUA: ...No. I am RESMORTUA, LORD OF EVIL, finally returned to the realm of the living.

Would you like to join my demonic army?

(beat)

REANIMATED CORPSE: Sure. Can we go get some coffee first? My head is killing me. *(because he*

died of a head injury hahahahahahaha)

RESMORTUA *(in a low but agreeable growl)*: Sounds good.

They exit

scene